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LADIES AT HOME;

OR,

Gentlemen, we can do without You.

A FEMALE INTERLUDE,

IN ONE ACT.

BY THE AUTHOR OF THE "BEE HIVE."

LONDON:

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1819.

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TO

RICHARD JONES, Esq.

OF THE

Theatres Royal, Covent-Garden, and Hay-Market.

As a token of the sincerest esteem and regard,

This Trifle is inscribed by his Friend,

THE AUTHOR.

Genl. H. H. H. 10 Mar 56

PREFACE.

THE AUTHOR owes the plot of the following trifle, to a French Opera in two acts, called “*La Jeune Prude* ;”—how far it is a translation, as has been gratuitously asserted, the candid reader of both, will best be able to decide,

Although another piece drawn from the same source, was brought out at the English Opera-House the night before this interlude was performed—it met with a success which exceeded the Author’s most sanguine expectations.

He can only attribute this good fortune to the indulgence of the public ; and, to the excellent performance, and kind exertions, of the Ladies of the Hay-Market Theatre. He cannot find words adequate to thank them—the applause they received was more eloquent than any praise his feeble pen can trace—he can only add, that he ever will bear in grateful remembrance, the interest they all appeared to take in the welfare of this little production.

PREFACE.

Yet, in justice to his feelings, he cannot let this public opportunity escape, without expressing his obligations to Miss E. BLANCHARD, who played the part of Lady Lucretia, after the third night, under the most trying circumstances; when it was impossible that she could have been perfect.* In this arduous undertaking, this young lady betrayed an anxious emotion, which must have convinced the audience (who seemed to sympathise in her embarrassment) that she possessed that real sensibility, and acute feeling, which art, in vain, will attempt to imitate. and which, must lead the lovers of the Drama, to look upon her as one of the most promising ornaments of the British Stage.

* Miss E. Blanchard, had only received the part the preceding day, and had but once rehearsed it in the morning.

Dramatis Personae

<i>Lady Antidote,</i>	Mrs. Davenport.
<i>Lady Lucretia,</i>	Mrs. Gibbs.
<i>Mrs. Banter,</i>	Mrs. Edwin.
<i>Miss Laura,</i>	Miss. Beaumont.
<i>Mrs. Lenient,</i>	Mrs. Connor.
<i>Miss Prim,</i>	Mrs. Kendall.
<i>Miss Buckram,</i>	Mrs. Liston.
<i>Jenny,</i>	Mrs. T. Hill.

SCENE.—*A Country-house of Lady Antidote.*

The Lines in inverted Comma's 'thus,' were omitted in Representation.

LADIES AT HOME.

SCENE I.—*A Room at Lady Antidotes.*

Enter LAURA, R.H.

Lau. I hope my aunt, and cousin, are now satisfied. Not a man left in the house, or allowed to visit us, and all this, because, poor Mr. Boville loves me, and because, aunty says, I love him ; because, when he looks at me, I blush, and sigh : and when he does not look at me, I look at him—because—ah me !—I surely do not love him,—because—cousin says, I should not, heigho !

SONG.

Is it love my bosom fires ?
Throbbing heart, ah quickly tell.
Dreading, courting, fond desires,
'Thoughts, which other thoughts dispel,
Love they say's the source of pleasure,
If 'tis true—then why this pain ?
Yet tho' painful, 'tis my treasure,
Still tho' dreaded, flight is vain.

What folks say, there's no believing,
The fond youth, I cannot love.
Yet near him, my bosom's heaving,
And they say, my looks improve.
When near him, I blush, I falter,
And I wish, he were away.
Then he goes,—my wishes alter !
And I wish.—I wish he'd stay.

Enter Mrs. BANTER, R.H.

Mrs. B. Well, Laura, always sighing, and singing ome mournful ditty ! your birds forgotten ! your harp unstrung, your geraniums withered, your work crooked, and your dear eyes, big with the

starting tear. If these be not the symptoms of love—I'm not a widow.

Lau. Love indeed ! and with whom should poor Laura be in love ?

Mrs. B. I know not with whom you should be, but I know with whom you are. Come, entrust me, with all your hopes, and fears, and I promise you, dear girl, my assistance and advice.

Lau. You have no doubt heard, that my aunt, and cousin, politely insisted, on Mr. Boville's discontinuing his visits.

Mrs. B. I am acquainted with every particular, Lady Antidote and your prim cousin, lady Lucretia, like all prudes, would wish to condemn you to bend under the same yoke that galls them.

Lau. Prudes !—what's a prude Mrs. Banter ?

Mrs. B. A prude my gentle girl is a non-descript animal, reserved, when she's young, as she dares not run after a beau, and reserved when she's old, as no beau will run after her.

Lau. That's exactly aunty's, and cousin's case, they scold me, when I even look up, when there are men in company.

Mrs. B. Because, men most likely, look down on them, but I am preparing for Lady Lucretia, a salutary lesson, which I trust will cure her, of her affectation, and ensure your happiness.

Lau. My dearest friend ! would you believe it ? she has ordered me not even to stir out of the room without her, and all this because Mr. Boville wrote me a letter.

Mrs. B. A letter ?

Lau. I presume, at least, it was for me, for he was going to hand it to me, when cousin snapt at it, and did so abuse poor, dear, Mr. Boville ! but here she comes. Mrs. Banter do stand by me, and if she scolds, pray take my part.

Mrs. B. Fear nothing, dear child ; a young girl who wants a husband, and a young widow who

has no particular objection to try another, will always be a match for age and prudery.

Enter LADY LUCRETIA, R.H.

Lady L. Well, Miss Laura, I hope that you have come to a proper sense of your shameful conduct.

Lau. Dear cousin what have I done?

Lady L. What have you done Miss? unparalleled impudence! Is it nothing at your age, nay, at any age, to listen to the vile adulation of that viper *Man*; to receive the romantic trash his odious pen has traced?

Mrs. B. Dear me, Lady Lucretia, a young man writes a few lines to a young girl, and one would think that Church and State were in danger.

Lau. I'm sure, cousin, there was nothing naughty in it.

Lady L. You are sure! and pray, Miss, who made you a judge of what's naughty—what's the meaning of all this?

Mrs. B. Why, my lady, the purport is clear enough, tho' lovers, now-a-days, are not so laconic in their declarations as they should be. Nothing like simplicity, madam. I love you, and if you love me, pull the bell, and send for the parson: but, madam, if I love you, and you don't love me, I'll pull the bell, and send for my horse—that's coming to the point at once.

Lady L. Love you, love me!—Mrs. Banter, I entertain the highest respect for you. But, as my aunt, lady Antidote, and I, are responsible for this giddy child's education; we must prevent her from straying in *those ways some* folks find so delightful.

Mrs. B. (aside.) You shall pay dearly for *some* folks.

Lady L. Come, miss, to your room, and if ever we see you look at the men—

Lau. Why, the men, will be looking at me.

Lady L. No more, to your room, and should your Boville dare to approach this house, we'll secure you in a place, inaccessible to the temerity of his odious race. [*Exit Laura, sobbing. R.H*

Mr. B. I do not think, lady Lucretia, that you will find severity, of any use with that gentle girl.

Lady L. If the austerity of prudence, is deem'd severity, then Mrs. Banter, am I glad to be called severe,

Mrs. B. The austerity of prudence!! Believe me, austere as you think yourself, I shall some day, see you in love, and disappointed.

Lady L. You may answer for your own heart, Mrs. Banter, but I cannot conceive, by what authority, you pretend to account for the feelings of mine.

Mrs. B. Nor can I conceive, by what right, your heart affects, to be made of other stuff than your neighbours.

Lady L. Thank heaven, it is.

Mrs. B. Suppose now, a handsome, amiable, young man.—

Lady L. I hate handsome men.—In my opinion, good looks are superfluous.

Mrs. B. Perhaps; but, were I marrying, I should have an eye to superfluities.

Lady L. Such affected wretches!

Mrs. B. Now there's my twin-brother, Augustus. (*pointedly.*) I have often heard you say, that he was charming.

Lady L. I have certainly, said that—that he was good-looking, (*with embarrassment.*) but, you know he is only a boy—a mere boy: besides, he is the very image of you, my dear Mrs. Banter, and I could not avoid transferring to him during your absence, part of that sincere affection I entertain for you:—besides, I had commenced giving him a little moral advice.

Mrs. B. I assure you, madam, whatever you have told my young brother in your moral lessons, he talks of you so much by day, that I dare swear, he dreams of nothing else all night.

Lady L. (*warmly.*) Dear boy! Does he indeed? He is so interesting. What a pity it would be, were he to fall into evil hands.

Mrs. B. It would indeed. But I am surprised he is not yet here—he was so anxious to return, to avail himself of your kind admonitions.

Lady L. He shall be most welcome.

Mrs. B. What! altho' a man!

Lady L. A man! nonsense, he is but a boy—a mere child!

Mrs. B. He's not so young:—we're exactly the same age, for the same hour gave birth to us both.

Lady L. I thought her at least ten years older. (*Aside.*) But here's my aunt with our friends.

Enter LADY ANTIDOTE, MRS. LENIENT, MISS PRIM, with a lap-dog, and MISS BUCKRAM. R.H.

Lady A. My dear niece, where have you been?

Miss B. You have lost a very great treat, a festival of virtue. Miss Prim, has been giving us in the Summer-house, a most elaborate lecture upon the evils of matrimony.

Lady L. I left you, ladies, to have a little talk with my imprudent cousin Laura, she was so rash, as to allow a young man to write to her.

Lady A. A man write to my niece! I'm petrified.

Miss P. Madam, you appal me!

Miss B. I'm thunderstruck!

Miss P. It is a melancholy thing, that we have not in this loose country, nunneries, to immure such slippery young people.

Mrs. L. But my dear ladies, how can we prevent a young man from paying us his addresses?

Miss P. Us!—not meaning me, I hope, madam.

Miss B. I should like to see one of your Dandies, paying his addresses to me.

Miss P. There is a dignified manner of repelling the rude attempts of these men. Thus,—Sir, pray what do you mean?

Lady A. Or, sir, sir, I do not conceive your impertinence.

Miss B. Or, sir, you labor under a miscomprehension, sir.

Lady A. You may laugh, ladies, but if any one of my family, permitted the shadow of a little finger to cast an umbrage on their reputation, I would expunge their very name from the genealogy of the Antidotes. My niece shall never wed with my consent, no—never.

Mrs. B. Yet, my lady Antidote, you yourself were married three times.

Lady A. That, madam, was the more effectually to convince myself, of the superiority of a single life.

Lady L. Perhaps, Mrs. Banter, approves of Laura's having given permission to Mr. Boville.

Mrs. B. My dear lady, men are apt to do whatever they like, whether permitted, or not.

Mrs. L. Oh! the wretches! so they are. Happy the woman, who can set slander at defiance.

Lady A. I defy it, madam.

Miss P. So do I.

Miss B. And, so do I.

Lady L. Let us not, ladies, pretend to dictate to others. 'Some people are overjoyed, at hearing the drawing-room whisper, buz, when they are announced; others are inflated with pride, when a titled libertine hands them to their carriage, amidst the titter of fops, and footmen. While some I know, who are elated in seeing the initials of their names bandied about in the filthy newspapers, as the glorious heroines of a fashionable fracas.' I can only remark, that no female is exposed to

calumny when by her manners she commands respect, silences insinuations, and keeps all men at bay.

[*Exit* R.H.]

Lady A. Do you not envy me, ladies, to have such a niece, such a paragon of super-excellence?

Mrs. B. Ah! your niece, like many others, may some day, most innocently writhe under the fang of malice.

Lady A. My niece, writhe under a fang, madam!

Mrs. L. We are all open to remark.

Lady A. My niece, madam, is only remarkable for her impregnable virtue.

Mrs. B. No fortress is deem'd impregnable until attack'd.

Lady A. Attacked madam! lady Lucretia, is un-attackable; she would freeze a sun-beam, if it dared to shine illicitly upon her.

Miss P. And so would I.

Miss B. And so would I!—You quite shock me.

Mrs. B. What! by saying, that nothing can secure defenceless virtue from slander!

Miss P. Virtue, madam, is never defenceless, unless she pleases to lay down her arms. A virtuous woman's face, madam, should like my own, resemble the famed Medusa's head, and petrify impertinence.

[*Exit*, R.H.]

Miss B. If one of your gay deceivers, had the audacity to look improperly on me, with one glance, I'd make him fly to the deserts of Arabia—to the deserts of Arabia, Madam. Men, I detest. Give me my pussy—my Tammy—and I am satisfied.

SONG.

Oh! Where have you been all day my dear Tammy?

Where have you been all day my dear Tammy?

With wicked eyes of yellow bright,

Sparkling both by day and night,

Watching o' that young bird, just flown from its mammy.

And where got you that young bird my dear Tammy ?

Where got you that young bird my dear Tammy ?

You caught it with that velvet paw,

Which hides thy pretty, gentle claw,

That never yet scratch'd thy mistress, dear, dear Tammy.

[*Exit*, R.H.]

Lady A. Indeed, Mrs. Banter, your free mode of thinking is quite horrific.

Mrs. B. Because I maintain that frailty is the lot of mankind.

Lady A. Mankind ! madam ! as I never meddle with matters that do not concern me, you must also permit me to withdraw. [*Exit*, R.H.]

Mrs. L. Indeed Mrs. Banter, this is too bad.

Mrs. B. Depend upon it, things are bad enough, when people pretend to be too good, but now, that we are alone, I must entrust you with a plan that I have conceived, and am immediately going to put into execution, and Jenny shall assist us.

Mrs. L. I fortunately, am neither an old maid, or a prude, and shall assist you with all my heart.

Mrs. B. You know, my twin brother Augustus ?

Mrs. L. Perfectly, the very image of you.

Mrs. B. Well, availing myself of his absence, I dressed in his cloathes, and was introduced to Lady Lucretia, who, was long anxious to know him, she saw me, encouraged my frequent visits ; with all her prudery she seemed to understand pretty well the language of the eyes, and I believe, I can manage pretty well, my ocular telegraphs. She glanced, I glanced—glances brought on blushes, blushes sighs !—She played the bashful, and I was as awkward, oh, as awkward as a school boy ; in taking a chair, I dropt my hat, in picking up my hat I dropt my gloves, in snatching at my gloves, I upset a chair, she laughed, down went the hat again. Then I heaved a sigh ! elaborated a sentimental tear in a downcast eye. In short, she soon

imagined that I was smitten with her, and instead of dropping, and picking up my hat in timid embarrassment, when I perceived that I had smitten her—I clapt it on a peg.

Mrs. L. Delightful! but what do you intend to do?

Mrs. B. Make her surrender, and cry for mercy.

Mrs. L. That's right, she is in your power, let your revenge be ample.

Mrs. B. Ample!—I am a woman, *Mrs. Lenient*, and she is—a prude. [*Exeunt*, L.H.]

SCENE II.

Lady Lucretia's Chamber. A window, with a balcony, looking into a garden. To the left a closet door. In the bottom, a door, supposed to lead to the rest of the apartments. Night-lights on the Table.

Enter JENNY, with a letter, L.H.

Jenny. So, my mistress, has not yet retired to her chamber—where can she be, as she is above the wicked things of this world, as she calls it, I suppose she's in the garden looking after the comet. What a monstrous terrible house to be sure, oh! that ever I was born to come into it. Except, a lame messenger, a deaf porter, a blind coachman, and a drunken butler, no man's never allowed in it. My old Mistress says that love's all fudge—because she's as old as Gog, and Magog—Young mistress says, that love's ridiculous, but I've seen her hide many a sly letter in her reticule. Oh, gemini! if I had but stayed, with sweet Miss Kitty

Cotton, after she married that dear soldier officer, of the lancing folks. Oh, I'd now perhaps be a lancer too. None of your perriwigged pated old codgers for us, but a merry soldier, who tells us all about storming, and scaling, as how, before they batter away, all the young girls are sent out of the town, and all the old ladies, stay at home to keep house, and receive the visitors. Oh gemini, 'tis pure work.

SONG.

Fair Kitty was sued by a Doctor-in-law,
 He wrote her a passionate *brief*,
 He said his affection was without a *flaw*,
 And pray'd at her bench for *relief*;
 He swore that his heart was confined on her *writ*,
Licet languidus he was attach'd ;
 But though to his plea he made *affidavit*,
Non-suited, he soon was dispatch'd ;
 No, no Sir, no, no Sir, I can't tell a lie,
 So put on your wig and good by.

A Doctor of Music next courted her smile,
 To play in a nuptial *duetto*,
 But tho' *con amore* he sung for a while,
 She swore he was too *allegretto*,
 But he was *Da capo* and spoke *spiritoso*;
 Till Kitty's *forte* was *crescendo*,
 And *flat* she dismissed him with voice *maestoso*,
 And *presto* she sent him *tremendo*;
 No, no sir, no, no sir, I can't tell a lie.
 So take up your pipes and good by,

But next came a soldier, with ease and with grace,
 She saw, he knew how to *salute* ;
 He said will you *list*, or I'll *right about face*,
 Poor Kitty now sigh'd, and was mute :
 Quoth he, come *step out*, for I cannot *mark time*,
 To the Chaplain *quick march*, will you come ?
 Our fifes, and our trumpets, the wedding shall chime ;
 Or I'm off at the *tap of the drum* :
 Yes, yes Sir ; Yes, yes Sir ; I can't tell a lie.
 A Soldier, I find, I must try.

Enter LADY LUCRETIA, R.H.

Lady L. How dare you thus to prophane my retirement with your odious vulgar songs?

Jenny. I was only—

Lady L. No more : quit my chamber.

Jenny. Here's a letter, my lady, from Mrs. Banter. She left the house all in tears—every body must cry here, when no man's never allowed to come and laugh with us.

Lady L. Impertinent hussey, quit my room.

Jenny. I wish the house was on fire, then we should be obliged to call in some men to put it out.

[*Exit Jenny*, L.H.]

Lady L. So, Mrs. Banter is offended. (*reads.*) I am glad she is gone, her free manners were insupportable, yet I hope she won't be spiteful enough to prevent her brother coming here. Dear boy, I know not why—but when he is with me—my antipathy to his sex is not half so strong. (*A Guitar is heard under the window.*) What is this—it must be that insolent Boville playing under Laura's window. What are my gardeners,—my servants about—I'll alarm the house. (*runs to a bell upon the table—but as she is going to ring it—singing is heard.*)

SONG. (*without.*)

Dared I declare, I dearly love thee :
What language could my thoughts impart ?
But let my silent actions prove thee,
The fond emotions of my heart.

Heavens! 'tis the voice of Augustus!—Is the boy mad—at this hour of the night. (*She runs and throws open the window, Mrs. Banter, as Augustus, is discovered standing on the balcony.*) What do I see, Sir! You here?

Mrs. B. (with timidity.) Yes, my lady, 'tis I. Your poor Augustus stands before you.

' *Lady. L.* I see it but too well, Sir. What on earth brings you here?

' *Mrs. B.* Well, my lady, I'm gone.

' *Lady L.* You are gone, sir; and there you remain like a statue!

' *Mrs. B.* Well, my lady, then I'll walk in.'

Lady L. Dare you presume to enter my apartment.

Mrs. B. (falling on her knees,) If I have offended, at your feet I beg, I implore forgiveness.

Lady L. (with emotion.) At my feet! rise, sir,—if any one were to come in;—rise I beg of you.

, *Mrs. B.* Oh! lady, do but think, ten long, eternal days have now elapsed, since I have seen you.

' *Lady L.* A very long period I confess.

' *Mrs. B.* Oh! they were centuries to me.

' *Lady L.* But sir, if you wished to have seen me, this is not the usual method of visiting a lady. Could you not have come by day—with your sister.

' *Mrs. B.* My sister! she has forbidden me your house.

' *Lady L. (Aside.)* I thought her capable of any thing.'

Mrs. B. Besides, I remarked, whenever I sat near you in company, that all the ladies whispered and tittered.

Lady L. Well, Sir?

Mrs. B. So, I preferred a tete-a-tete—a drawing-room might have caused idle conversation—so I selected this chamber—In coming by day, I might have been seen—so I came by night; entering by the door the servants would have remarked me—so I came in by the window, I was so anxious to receive some more of those kind moral lessons you used to give me.

Lady L. (Pointing to the Window.) You have made a very pretty use of them I must confess;—but are you certain no one has seen you coming in?

Mrs. B. Not a living being. I left home after night-fall, and came by the by-paths thro' the forest.

Lady L. Poor boy! to walk twelve long miles, and in such a night!

Mrs. B. I did not even intend to come in—merely to lay all night under your window—to hear your voice—to breathe the same air—to greet the morn that would awake you—instinctively I commenced repeating a few lines I wrote—then I saw a ladder—then—

Lady L. Those lines you sung—

Mrs. B. Were compos'd for you, during my mournful vigils.

Lady L. Were there any more verses?

Mrs. B. An hundred, and seventy-three. I'll sing them to you all.

Lady L. No, no, not now, you'd disturb the house; but you shall read them.

Mrs. B. Shall I! the garrison consents to a parley. (*Aside.*) I am so overjoyed: such an emotion thrills thro' every vein—my head.

Lady L. He'll faint! heaven's, what's to be done!

Mrs. B. Oh, lady Lucretia! Lucretia! lady Lucretia, Oh! (*She falls in Lady L's. arms, Lady L. supports her.*)

Lady L. Recover, I beseech you.

Mrs. B. Oh, my head!

Lady L. Dear, Mr. Augustus!

Mrs. B. Oh, my head!

Lady L. Do not terrify me.

Mrs. B. My head, my head!

Lady L. Dear Augustus! for my sake, I intreat—dearest Augustus. (*fondly.*)

Mrs. L. Oh! I am better now.

Lady L. Here! take this smelling bottle. (*gives a bottle.*)

Mrs. B. Besides, I was so apprehensive of meeting my sister here.

Lady L. Oh, she is gone; You have nothing to dread from her malice!

Mrs. B. She is very malicious!

Lady L. A silly creature—would you believe it, the woman is so vain, that she thinks herself the image of you.

Mrs. B. Silly creature indeed! not the least likeness.

Lady L. Not the least—your countenance is open, candid, honest; her's is full of guile and deceit.

Mrs. B. (*Returning the bottle.*) Many thanks for your kindness, my lady. Can I believe mine eyes!—you, deigning to lean over your poor pupil, your poor Augustus!—Oh! joys like these too soon, too soon must fleet. (*Kisses her hand.*)

Bell rings R. H.

Lady L. Heavens!—the supper bell!—you must have done—I must go down to supper.

Mrs. B. You must go to supper!—Oh! for you I could live without supper all my life time. Cruel woman!

Lady L. You are not aware of the danger you expose me to—I *must* attend the supper table.

Mrs. B. How hungry you must be—all the family are down already—and that door—

Lady L. Well, sir!

Mrs. B. It can lock, can't it?

Lady L. What then, sir?

Mrs. B. Why then, here goes (*runs and shuts the door.*)—there!

Lady L. What, sir, you have the audacity to lock my door?

Mrs. B. (*Aside.*) So! she thinks its bolted—believe me—the purity of my sentiments is such—my love—

Lady L. (*Indignantly.*) Your love, sir?—never, never, let that odious word *love* escape your lips.

Mrs. B. Oh! that I cannot promise.

Lady L. Then quit the house instantly, sir.

Mrs. B. Cruel woman!—my fate is in your hands—no power on earth shall dare prevent me from adoring you; and should human efforts tear me from you—thus shall I rescue myself from their oppression. (*Draws a pistol.*)

Lady L. A pistol!

Mrs. B. Loaded to the muzzle with slugs and bullets.

Lady L. The boy is mad—rise—rise—I entreat.

Mrs. B. Then say that you do not hate me.

Lady L. Hate you, Augustus!—Is that possible?—

Mrs. B. Then do you love me?—

Lady L. How can I reply?

Mrs. B. Then you detest, abhor, abominate, execrate me: farewell for ever.—(*Runs to the window, Lady Lucretia follows and holds her.*)

Lady L. Hold! in mercy's name!

Mrs. B. No more—farewell, farewell.

Lady L. Then, I, I, do love you.

Mrs. B. Dearly?

Lady L. Dearly, Augustus, dearly.—

Enter JENNY, L.H.

Jenny. My lady, supper, ah, (*shrieks.*) a man, a man, don't look at me, a man! a man!—

Mrs. B. Oh Lucretia! we're undone!

Jenny. Thieves! murder! a man!

Lady L. Silence Jenny, silence ; I order you.

Jenny. Housebreaking and burglary, murder, a man !

Lady L. Silence my dearest Jenny, I beg of you.
(*Gives a purse.*)

Jenny. I am silent, but a man, don't look at me.

Lady L. 'Tis all, 'tis all a joke, an innocent joke.

Jenny. A joke with a man ! oh gemini !

Lady L. (*Aside.*) A good thought ! I have it. I'll pretend 'tis Mrs. Banter in her brother's clothes.—a man ! why you silly creature, ha, ha, ha ! 'tis a woman.

Jenny. A woman !

Lady L. To be sure, Mrs. Banter in her brother's clothes.

Mrs. B. (*Aside.*) Well done cunning.

Lady L. Pray humour the deceit. (*Aside to Mrs. B.*) You have heard of the strong resemblance between her and her brother, and by dressing my good friend Mrs. Banter, in his clothes we were preparing a surprise for the ladies after supper.

Jenny. Oh gemini ! I'd have taken you sir, pardon me ma'am, for as pure a gentleman as ever took maid or widow in---to church---dear me, dear me, let's go down.

Lady L. That's impossible.

Jenny. Eh, I see ! hem, all would be up if we went down—but how did the lady get in ?

Lady L. Why, she, she left her carriage—

Mrs. B. At the entrance of the avenue, and by way of a short cut, I came in at the window.

Lady L. You had better go the way you came.
(*Aside.*)

Mrs. B. (*Aside.*) I forgot to tell you my lady, I upset the ladder.

Lady L. How unfortunate, hark'yc, Jenny, Jenny my dear Jenny, when the company have withdrawn, you must contrive to get Mrs. Banter out unnoticed.

Jenny. ‘ Oh, ma’am !—lud ma’am !—to be seen
‘ with a gentleman-like-looking lady—at this black
‘ hour of the night—I’d be so shameful, so I would
‘ —with any thing in the shape of a man,—but
‘ can’t the lady put on her clothes again !’

Lady L. (Hesitating.) She left them in her
‘ carriage.’ But an idea strikes me—we are about
the same size, into this closet and put on one of my
gowns.

Mrs. B. Oh my lady—I’d do any thing for you,
but to turn woman ; oh !

Lady L. Nonsesne, in with you.

Jenny. In with you, I’ll help you,

Lady L. You’ll help, impertinent girl.

Mrs. B. But modesty, modesty.

Lady L. Modesty, trash—a pretty time to talk of
modesty when my reputations at stake, in with you,
in with you.

*(Mrs Banter goes into the closet, Jenny anxiously
endeavours to follow her, but Lady Lucretia
prevents her.)*

Jenny. Oh I must help her.

Mrs. B. (In the closet.) Where are my stays.

Jenny. I’ll lace them.

Lady L. You lace them indeed.

*Mrs. B. (Coming from the closet in woman’s
cloaths.)* Oh ! what shall I do, I’m so awkward.

Lady L. Now quick, the coat and hat under the
sofa. *(Noise without.)*

Jenny. Oh gemini ; here are the ladies.

Lady L. Now sir, in mercy’s name be discreet.

Mrs. B. What will become of me, don’t let ’em
kick me down stairs.

Lady L. Be as womanish as you can, and hold
your tongue.

Mrs. B. That’s not very womanish either.

Lady L. Distraction, be as silent as you can,
and leave all to me.

*Enter LADY ANTIDOTE, Mrs. LENIET, Miss PRIM, and
Miss BUCKRAM, each with a bed-room candle. R.H.*

Lady A. Walk in ladies, walk in.

Lady L. Mrs. Banter, dear aunt is just returned.

All. Mrs, Banter !

Mrs. B. My dear Mrs. Banter what brought you back so soon.

Mrs B. (Awkwardly.) Why madam—because—do you see---because---

Lady L. Let me explain ; my good friend was so anxious to make up our silly dispute of this evening, that she immediately returned in private.

‘ Mrs. Len. I am happy to hear of the reconciliation and now let a kiss be the pledge of its sincerity.

‘ Lady L. A kiss !

‘ Mrs. Len. Yes a kiss, I insist upon it,

‘ Mrs. B, (Kissing.) My dearest Lady Lucretia. Now we are friends for ever, but I must leave you, farewell—

Lady L. Farewell, my dearest Mrs. Banter.

Mrs. B. Adieu ladies—adieu. [*Exit, L.H.D*

Lady A. Now ladies I hope that you are convinced of the impotence of scandal.

Lady L. What now aunt?

Lady A. Yes, virtuous niece, scarce had supper been concluded when an anonymous note was handed in, purporting that you were tete a tete in your room with a young man.

Mrs. Len. (Pulling the coat and hat from under the sofa.) But what is all this.

Lady L. (Aside.) What's to be done now.

Miss B. A man's coat let me go.

Miss P. It signifies not ; if there's a man in the house. Were I to walk barefooted. I quit it.

Lady L. Ha ! Ha ! Ha !

Lady A. You laugh, lady Lucretia, recollect you are my niece, and this is no matter for laughter.

Miss P. No indeed—a man's hat.

Miss B. And a man's coat.

Miss P. Aye, and Lord know's what else may be found.

Miss B. Aye, to be sure. Heaven knows what the fellow may not have left behind him.

Lady L. Ha ! Ha ! your alarm amuses me—here Jenny, Jenny—explain to these astonished ladies,

the cause of their terrors. Ha! Ha!—be indiscreet at your peril. (*aside.*)

Jenny. This coat ladies—Ha! Ha! Ha! 'tis all a joke, my lady, and Mrs. Banter, were to have play'd you after supper. This coat belongs to Mrs. Banter's brother—and as saving your ladyships presence—he is as like her as two peas. Bless them! The brother was to have pass'd for the sister—I meant the sister for the brother—and you were all to have been hugely astonished—and—that's all I know.

[*Exit, JENNY.*

Lady A. I hope this is satisfactory.

Miss B. (Aside to Miss P.) Humph! I have my suspicions,

Miss P. (Aside to Miss B.) I can perceive these matters without spectacles.

Mrs. L. (Taking up the coat.) This odious coat under the sofa, certainly looked rather suspicious—(*Aside, throwing the coat into the closet.*) and shall be more suspicious still.

Lady A. Appearance, ladies, can never injure my lamb.

Mrs. BANTER re-enters by the window and glides into the closet.

Lady L. Well, ladies, I trust that you now are convinced of the injustice of your suspicions.

Lady A. All that I can say, is—that whoever has, does, or shall asperse you, my niece—has, does, and shall have aspersed—and asperses the inaspersible house of the Antidotes.

Mrs. L. Good night, lady Lucretia, a pleasant slumber.

Miss P. Good night, lady Lucretia, pleasing visions.

Miss B. Good night, lady Lucretia, agreeable dreams.

Mrs. Banter rushes out of the closet as Augustus.

Mrs. B. Hold, ladies, hold!

Miss P. and Miss B. A man! a man!

Lady A. Don't come near me.

Lady L. Heavens! The boy is deranged.

Mrs. B. Ladies, were I longer to remain silent, and conceal'd, I should not be acting the part of a man of honour, of morality,

Miss P. Pretty morality! Oh, ye highwayman, keep off.

Miss B. Stand off! how vicious he looks!

Mrs. B. Yes, ladies, I—I alone am culpable. Blinded by a fatal passion, which Lady Lucretia's prudence condemned; distraction, and disappointed love, led me to any thing. 'Bribes opened the gates
' of this hallowed mansion—but I found, too late,
' that purity like her's resembles the magic mirror,
' most resplendent; when the breath that dared ob-
' scure it, vanishes in everlasting shame.'

Lady L. Well, Sir, I now trust, that you are convinced of the rashness of your expectations. The respect, I owe your sister, alone prevented me from revealing your sex, when you should have met with that chastisement your temerity deserved.

Enter JENNY. L.H.

Jenny. Mrs. Banter's just arrived. She is come in a coach and four, looking for her little brother.

Mrs B. My sister!—do not tell her any thing. where shall I fly to? [*Runs off, Jenny follows, L.H.*

Lady A. Well, ladies, you see that the purity of the Antidotes, will always rise triumphant.

Lady L. After your attempts to injure my character, ladies, I am rejoiced that you have witnessed this last scene.

Mrs. L. Yet, you will confess, that appearances were against you; and, that spite of her innocence, poor woman, can be torn to pieces by prudes, and antiquated dames.

Miss P. Well, Miss Buckram, I told you 'twas a man!—ah! he look'd so treacherous,—so sly.

Miss B. Aye, just like my Tammy, when he's watching a cock-sparrow.

Enter JENNY. L.H.

Jenny. Oh, ladies! oh, ladies!

Lady A. What's the matter now!

Lady L. What ails the girl !

Miss P. More men no doubt.

Jenny. (*crying.*) Oh, lady Antidote !

Lady A. Well,

Lady L. Speak, in mercy's name,

Miss P. The girl's mad !

Jenny. And you my lady Lucretia—don't go near the fish-pond :—oh ! we'll have a coroner's inquest—oh ! oh !

Miss B. No coroner, judge, or jury, shall enter the house while I'm in it.

Jenny. Oh ! Mr. Augustus ! Mr. Augustus ! who would have thought—

Lady L. Heaven, is the boy drowned.

Jenny. I wish he was drown'd for poor Miss Laura's sake.

Lady A. Laura ! what of Laura ?

Lady L. What has she done !

Jenny. Done—oh ! oh . crimini, she's undone.

Lady A. Oh !—Laura undone !

Jenny. Oh ! that Mr. Augustus—tho' he is but a little bit of a man—

All. Well !

Jenny. Instead of going out when his sister came in, up he whips—

Lady A. Whips what ? Speak—

Jenny. Miss Laura, oh ! oh !

Lady L. Laura—distraction. Where is she ?

Jenny. In her room, locked up with Mr Augustus.

Lady A. Oh ! the perfidious monster !

Lady L. Let us fly.

Miss P. Here's a pretty family.

Lady L. Laura ! Laura !

Mrs. B. Call the watch.

Miss P. and Miss B. Watch ! murder ! watch—watch ! assault ! battery, watch !!

[*They all rush to the door, where they meet Mrs. Banter holding Laura by the hand.*] L.H.

Mrs. B. Ladies, be not alarmed. Laura is under my protection. I beg your pardon, for this unseasonable intrusion, but having heard, that my young

brother Augustus, had left our house, on his way here, I came to ascertain the truth of the report.

Lady L. Your brother, madam has been here, but uninvited by me, I cannot account for his visit. Yet his prompt, and disgraceful expulsion, from this house, must have convinced him, that whatever opinion he might have formed of me, from *your* obliging reports, they were founded on error, if not on malice.

Mrs. B. This bitter attack, my lady, will compel me to give publicity, to a gentle lesson, which in charity I had reserved for your private ear.

Lady L. Madam, I do not understand.

Mrs. B. My brother perhaps, will understand you better.—His countenance is open, candid, and honest, while mine is full of guile and deceit.

Lady L. What do I hear?

Mrs. B. Your poor Augustus stands before you.
(*General surprise.*)

Lady L. You have given me a cruel lesson.

Mrs. B. Friendship shall seal my lips, if you consent to this dear girl's happiness.

Lau. Dear cousin do forgive me.

Lady A. She has my consent.

Mrs. L. Not a word shall I reveal.

Lau. And whatever, those other old ladies say, no one, will believe them.

Miss P. Impudent hussey!

Miss B. Insolent minx! I'll forbid the bans!

Mrs. B. Come lady Lucretia? (*To Lady Lucretia.*) let us be friends, and spite of prudery, confess that (*to the Audience.*) gentlemen, dear gentlemen, we *cannot* do without you, therefore—

Lady L. Therefore, what?

Mrs. B. We hope the ladies, will be permitted, to receive you, at home---to-morrow.

THE END.

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